



United States
of America

Congressional Record

PROCEEDINGS AND DEBATES OF THE 113th CONGRESS, FIRST SESSION

Vol. 159

WASHINGTON, WEDNESDAY, JUNE 5, 2013

No. 78

House of Representatives

The House met at 10 a.m. and was called to order by the Speaker pro tempore (Mr. STEWART).

DESIGNATION OF SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

The SPEAKER pro tempore laid before the House the following communication from the Speaker:

WASHINGTON, DC,

June 5, 2013.

I hereby appoint the Honorable CHRIS STEWART to act as Speaker pro tempore on this day.

JOHN A. BOEHNER,

Speaker of the House of Representatives.

MORNING-HOUR DEBATE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the order of the House of January 3, 2013, the Chair will now recognize Members from lists submitted by the majority and minority leaders for morning-hour debate.

The Chair will alternate recognition between the parties, with each party limited to 1 hour and each Member other than the majority and minority leaders and the minority whip limited to 5 minutes each, but in no event shall debate continue beyond 11:50 a.m.

BANGLADESH

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from California (Mr. GEORGE MILLER) for 5 minutes.

Mr. GEORGE MILLER of California. Mr. Speaker, I recently returned from a trip to Bangladesh where more than 1,100 garment workers died and 2,000 were injured in the Rana Plaza building collapse on April 24. Many Americans may remember the horrible pictures of workers being buried under tons of concrete from the collapsed building.

I learned a great deal about what must be done to improve safety condi-

tions in the garment industry there. Bangladesh is the second largest garment-producing nation, employing over 4 million skilled and industrious workers, mostly women, at a minimum wage of \$37 a month. I learned that many factories have continued to operate in unsafe residential or multistory commercial buildings even after the Rana Plaza collapse. I learned more about poor conditions created by a myriad of middlemen hired by retailers that pit one factory against the next, squeezing out the last few pennies per garment. I learned that Bangladesh garment workers subsidize those low prices with their lives.

I visited the hospital where there were scores of women, many with amputated legs and arms or who were suffering from brain damage from the collapse of that building where they were working and where they were locked inside. I met with a woman near Rana Plaza who was looking for her son even though the unidentifiable or the unclaimed workers had been buried in a mass grave.

And Rana Plaza is not an isolated case.

I visited with seven courageous women injured in the Tazreen Fashions factory fire that killed 112 workers last November. There were seven women who had to jump from the third and fourth floors of their factory because the factory supervisors locked the exits after the fire had started and had told them to go back to work or they would be fired, and the doors were locked. That was the policy of that factory and of many other factories. Just this week, we saw poultry workers in China locked in a factory after the fire had started; and they, too, perished in the fire. These were seven women who had to make the decision to jump from the third and fourth floors of this factory to save their lives. Tazreen produced garments for Walmart and many other American brands.

Listen to what the women told me:

Rehana jumped from the fourth floor window and was knocked unconscious. She broke her leg, and the doctors told her she will need to be on crutches for the rest of her life.

Reba was the breadwinner in her home. She jumped from the third floor. She cannot work because of the pain. Her husband is sick. She has two sons, one of whom just qualified for the military college, but she doesn't know if she can afford to keep him there; and until I prodded Bangladesh Garment Manufacturers Export Association, Reba had not received the promised stipend for those who were injured—6 months later.

Rowshanara jumped from the third floor and still has severe pain in her back and legs. She was visibly in pain after sitting too long while talking to us. She is single and gets by on loans. She has two teenage sons in school and doesn't want to force them to go to work, but she worries how she will get by.

Deepa worked on the third floor. She saw the fire, and tried to escape to the second floor. The factory manager padlocked the door and told everyone to keep working. Workers were crying and searching for a way out. A mechanic yelled to come to the east side of the building where he had created an exit. She jumped from the third floor and fell unconscious. She broke her left leg. She was 4 months pregnant, and she lost her baby.

Sumi decided to jump from the third floor rather than perish in the factory because she wanted her family to be able to identify her body, and that wouldn't happen if she were consumed in the fire. She broke her leg and arm and could not move. Her family borrowed money to pay for her medical bills before the association funds arrived. Two weeks before Rana Plaza, she came to the U.S. to urge retailers and brands to join the enforceable and

□ This symbol represents the time of day during the House proceedings, e.g., □ 1407 is 2:07 p.m.

Matter set in this typeface indicates words inserted or appended, rather than spoken, by a Member of the House on the floor.



Printed on recycled paper.

H3099